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AMEDIE HYPOLITE MENARD.

BY CHARLES L. CAPEN.

Amedie Hypolite Menard was born on a farm near Tremont, Ill., June 14, 1850, where he lived until 1861, when his father purchased the historic mansion in Tremont. After his father's death the son continued to live there until his death, January 29th, 1920. He is buried at Mount Hope Cemetery, Tremont. He was a bachelor.

The home built in 1847, contained many articles of early days, some of them costly and elegant, was a center of great attraction, and the abode of hospitality and attractiveness, the frequent resort of distinguished guests, from the time it was built until now.

He was unfailing in kindness and courtesy, endearing him to all his fellows, a student of the best literature, an extensive traveler, active in all that pertained to the public welfare, of an unbending integrity and of rare social qualities: in a word, he was, what includes all good qualities, a gentleman. He had a retentive memory and was delightful and instructive in conversation. For many years he was a director of the public schools and for a considerable period and to the date of his death, was the president of the Village Bank. His advice was widely sought, and freely and wisely given. Not anyone in his vicinity had a larger or more healthful influence. He attended a meeting of the State Historical Society on December 3, 1917. When he was introduced, with a statement of his distinguished descent, the audience rose and gave him the high honor. He studied deeply the early history and had a thorough knowledge of historic days. He could have boasted justly of a longer line of Illinois ancestry on his father's side than any other man, with one possible exception, now living: and on his mother's side a like descent from 1822.

His grandfather Pierre Menard, was a famous character, without whose name the history of the state cannot be written. He was born at St. Antoine thirty-five miles from Montreal—one authority says at Quebec—Oct. 7, 1766. At the age of nineteen he went to Vincennes, Indiana, where he was clerk

for Colonel Vigo, after whom Vigo County was named. There the business was largely with the Indians, with whose traits, customs and language he became remarkably familiar. In 1790 he moved to Kaskaskia, where he was a merchant until his death, June 13, 1844. In Moses' History of Illinois, it is stated "He seemed to know instinctively how to manage the Indians over whom he wielded great influence," and that "he was the most distinguished of the French emigrants who came to Illinois during and after the Revolution."

He had great success in making some important treaties, in preventing attacks and massacres upon and of the colonists, and in promoting peace and harmony between them and the whites. He could not have so succeeded had he not enjoyed their entire confidence in his veracity and fair-dealing. He never deceived any of them, and was never betrayed by them.

Also he was universally popular with the whites, for the above and other reasons. From the formation of the separate Territory of Illinois, until Illinois became a state, four terms, he was a member of and the presiding officer of the Legislature, then called "the Council." He helped frame the first Constitution, which originally contained the provision that one was not eligible for the office of Governor or Lieutenant Governor until he had been a citizen for thirty years. He would doubtless have been the first governor of the State but for the requisite that that officer must be one who was born in the United States. It was almost universally desired that Menard should be the first Lieutenant Governor and he had been naturalized but a short time, so the necessary change was made wholly on his account, and a final paragraph added that this should not be required as to the latter office:—probably the only instance in our basic law where a paragraph has been added intended to apply to but one person. This change took time, and the statehood, but for this, would have been granted a little earlier than it was.

During all these years he was the only Frenchman in that part of the State who was honored with important office. Beginning with 1818, for many years he was the Government Agent for the Indians. Some characteristic, interesting an-

ecdotes of him have come down to us which must be omitted here for want of space.

He was greatly interested in education: in recognition thereof, an important school was named after him, which was afterwards removed to St. Louis, and, under another name, is still noted.

In 1806 before Illinois was set off from the remaining part of Indiana, as President *pro tem* of the Legislative Council, he signed the charter for the first Institution of learning in the Territory, Vincennes University. A grant of 100,000 acres of land was made for the support of this University.

In 1839, Menard County was named in his honor. An imposing statue has been erected to him upon the Capitol grounds at Springfield, the gift of Charles Pierre Chouteau, the son of his partner in business.

Many other facts about Pierre Menard could be given. This is an incomplete sketch, but it is hoped enough has been written to show the greatness and the goodness of the man. He left what for the time was a large estate, and a large bag full of worthless promissory notes, he had paid as surety.

Kaskaskia is perhaps the most romantic of American municipalities, from 1673, when Marquette first reached the Illinois country, and took possession in the name of Christ. John Mason Peck says it was to Illinois what Paris is to France. Although it probably never contained more than a few hundred inhabitants—some authorities give much larger figures—it was a settled community before St. Louis or New Orleans had been thought of, and was in fact the capital of the Mississippi Valley. At one time or another it had as residents, distinguished men, but there is a charm about Pierre Menard greater than any other. It was the State Capital until 1820. From it missions were established among the red men, and at it from it our State owes its origin and the beginnings of its growth.

It has been said the greatest benefactors of mankind are the founders of states. We should cherish the memory of this Frenchman, and always revere his name. He did much for all of us. Fortunate, indeed, was the subject of this obituary to have so noble an ancestry.

To adapt somewhat:

“Gone is this great and good
Who here in peril stood
And raised his hymn.
Peace to the reverend dead
The light that on his head
So many years have shed
Shall ne’er grow dim.”

Hypolite Menard, from whom the late deceased received his middle name, served in the Legislature in 1828. Whether he was a son or nephew of Pierre, I have not been able to learn.

In the great flood of 1844, Kaskaskia with the exception of one or two houses was destroyed. One of these left was the residence of Pierre Menard, yet standing and for some years owned by Charles Linn. Since the death of Mr. Linn the house and farm has been sold. In its day it was a show place to the visitor at the ancient village; and is a stately residence. It seems almost providential it should have been so preserved. A bronze memorial tablet was dedicated at the house by the Daughters of the American Revolution on Illinois Day, December 3, 1919, and measures for permanent preservation of the house in a public park, as a state relic, are now in progress. The original estate was 700 acres which continued to be owned until a few years ago by some of the descendants. Pierre Menard was buried in the old Kaskaskia Cemetery, near the site of old Fort Gage. A few years ago the graves of the pioneers, including his, being in danger of being washed away by changes in the river, were removed by the State to a new cemetery, on higher ground, and a monument erected.

Pierre Menard, the son of Pierre, came to Fort Clark, built in 1813, now Peoria, as the Indian Agent, sometime in the '20s, or perhaps earlier. He was born at Kaskaskia, December 26th, 1797, and probably lived for a time as an Indian Agent at Wesley City, where he was at the head of affairs. He changed his name into the English equivalent, and afterwards was frequently called Col. Peter Menard. He

early bought lots in Pekin. In the Black Hawk War he was commissioned, June 22, 1832, First Lieutenant, in Captain William Gordon's Company of Mounted Volunteers, Illinois Militia. Afterwards was appointed a Captain and served under Brig. Gen. Atkinson until the close of the war, being mustered out "at Dixons"—now the city of Dixon—August 14, 1832.

His first wife was Caroline, the daughter of Major, afterwards Major General Stillman. At about the time Tremont became the County seat of Tazewell County in 1836, he removed to a farm, which he had bought and which he owned at the time of his death, near there. Afterwards he became owner of the mansion above mentioned.

May 10th, 1849, he married Emily Jane Briggs. She was born at Elkhart Grove, Illinois, March 6, 1824. He never sought public life, but besides some other local offices was a supervisor in 1866, and a member of the legislature. At one time he owned a large tract of land, in what is now Chicago. The Sherman House stands upon part of it, but he kept it only one year. He also at one time owned one-half of the land known as Fort Clark, a considerable part of what is now Peoria, and was the first merchant there. He was a man beloved by all, of great generosity, and devoted a large part of his time and thought for the benefit of others. Like his father, he had great influence with the Indians, spoke some of their languages, and was of good business ability. Illinois owes much to him for what she now is. He was a delightful conversationalist, full of reminiscences of the many stirring experiences of his memorable life.

He died at Tremont, November 29th, 1871. His wife, Emily Jane, died July 31, 1904.

As to the maternal side of the subject of this sketch: William Briggs when nineteen years old came with two brothers from Scotland to Culpeper County, Virginia, in 1754. He afterwards removed to Tennessee, then to Bardstown, Kentucky, where he died in February, 1800, seventy-five years old. His wife Judith Wroe died April, 1815, having reached the same age.

His son Benjamin, the eldest of twelve children was born in Virginia, April 3, 1783, and moved to Kentucky, probably in 1802. He helped Commodore Perry build his navy, and then served as a soldier—what would now be called a marine—in the Victory of Lake Erie, September 10th, 1813. Afterwards he served in the battle of the River Raisin, and other engagements until the close of the war; then receiving his discharge, he walked home overland, being compelled on the way to sell his gun to pay his expenses. He was a merchant for several years at Bardstown, when he lost all his property by a fire: he then came to the Illinois Territory (in time to be enumerated in the census of 1818) and located at Elkhart Grove, near the present village of Elkhart in Logan County: in 1822 he built a cabin a short distance east of Dillion Creek, on what is now known as the Menard farm, a mile and a half North-east of the Village of Tremont.

His two nephews, Hezekiah Davis and Thomas Briggs kept a store trading principally with the Indians, whose winter camp was less than two miles up the Creek. The supplies were obtained at the trading post now Wesley City. He then built a house about four rods south-west of the barn now on the land, moving his family there in 1824: after living there about ten years he moved to another home, one-third of a mile south-west where he died February 17, 1844.

This last settlement was known as "Pleasant Grove." His wife, Susan Hubbard, was born August 2, 1791, and died at Tremont, September 2, 1843.

He was first lieutenant in Capt. John G. Adams Company (Fifth Regiment, Mounted Volunteers, Col. James Johnson) from Pekin, in the Black Hawk War. Was sheriff, when his territory embraced more than the north half of the state. In those days the sheriff collected the taxes due in January. His county extended two hundred miles from north to south, in which there was no settlement except a small one at Galena. Rather than go so far at that time of the year, when part of the time he would have to sleep out of doors, he at one time paid the entire amount, nine dollars, himself. He was the first representative in the Legislature

from his district, was one of the three commissioners to lay out Tazewell County, and filled some minor offices. He died February 17, 1844. The old inhabitants who survived him spoke of him in high terms.

His fifth child, Emily Jane Briggs, born March 6, 1824, married Pierre Menard, the younger, of whom we have already written. She died July 31, 1904, in the Menard Mansion at Tremont, leaving her surviving two children, Sue Railsbach, the wife of John C. Railsbach, of Ashland, Nebraska, and the subject of this sketch; the latter it is believed was the last surviving male descendant of the pioneer, Pierre Menard, the elder.

His father, as we have seen, was an early pioneer of what is now Tazewell County, and made important contributions to its formation and development.

Amedie Hypolite Menard, thus combined French and Scotch blood, in equal proportions. He inherited many of the best traits of each race—the vivacity and artistic temperament of the one and the sturdy, conscientious, practical qualities of the latter.

It is interesting to reflect that these three generations in each line of ancestry, in turn, from Kaskaskia and Elkhart Grove, include almost the entire history of Illinois to the present day. How short a period, and how marvelous were the achievements and services by these families, and the other pioneers!